



Free e-News from your Hayward Fire Department-

### **Preventing Cooking Fires During the Holidays**

The Hayward Fire Department responds to cooking fires year round. Fires resulting from cooking continue to be the most common type of fire experienced by U.S. households. Cooking fires are also the leading cause of civilian fire injuries in residences. These fires are preventable by simply being more attentive to the use of cooking materials and equipment.

Don't become a cooking fire casualty. Learn the facts about cooking fire safety today!



When cooking, stay in the kitchen and keep an eye on the stove.

### **Safe Cooking Tips**

The kitchen can be one of the most hazardous rooms in the home if you don't practice safe cooking behaviors. Here are some safety tips to help:

- Never leave boiling, frying, or broiling food unattended. Stay in the kitchen! If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- Check food that is cooking regularly; use a timer to remind you that you are cooking.
- Keep anything that can catch fire – oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels, or curtains – away from your stovetop.
- Keep the stovetop, burners, and oven clean.
- Wear short, close-fitting, or tightly rolled sleeves when cooking. Loose clothing can dangle onto stove burners and can catch fire if it comes in contact with a gas flame or electric burner.

- Have a “kid-free zone” of at least 3 feet around the stove and areas where hot food or drink is prepared or carried.
- Always use cooking equipment that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).
- Follow manufacturer’s instructions and code requirements when installing, cleaning, and operating cooking equipment.
- Plug microwave ovens or other cooking appliances directly into an outlet. Never use an extension cord for cooking appliances as it can overload the circuit and cause a fire.
- Check electrical cords for cracks, breaks, or damage.

### **If You Have a Cooking Fire**

- Just get out! When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire and don’t re-enter for any reason.
- Call 9-1-1 after you leave from a cell phone or neighbors home.
- If calling from a cell phone, tell the dispatcher exactly where you live as they may not be familiar with your local area.
- If you do try to fight the fire, be sure others are already getting out and you have a clear path to the exit.
- Always keep a lid nearby when you’re cooking. If a small grease fire starts in a pan, smother the flames by carefully sliding the lid over the pan. Turn off the burner. Do not move the pan. To keep the fire from restarting, leave the lid on until the pan is completely cool.
- In case of an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed. After a fire, the oven should be checked and/or serviced before being used again.
- Always call the fire department, as they have special equipment to locate hidden fire that you may have overlooked.

### **Nuisance Smoke Alarms**

If a smoke alarm sounds during normal cooking, you may need to move it farther away from the kitchen (according to manufacturer’s instructions) and/or install a smoke alarm with a pause button. If your alarm already has a pause button, push the pause button, open the door or window, and fan the area around the alarm with a towel to get the air moving. **Do not disable the smoke alarm or take the batteries out!**

Treat every smoke alarm activation as a possible fire and react quickly and safely to the alarm.

### **Charcoal Grills**

- Purchase the proper starter fluid and store it out of reach of children and away from heat sources.
- Never add charcoal starter fluid when coals or kindling have already been ignited, and never use any flammable or combustible liquid other than charcoal starter fluid to get the fire going.

### **Propane Grills**

- Check the propane cylinder hose for leaks before using it for the first time each year.

- If you smell gas while cooking, immediately get away from the grill and call the fire department. Do not attempt to move the grill.
- All propane cylinders manufactured after April 2002 must have overfill protection devices (OPD). OPD devices are easily identified by their triangular-shaped hand wheel.
- Use only equipment bearing the mark of a recognized testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to set up the grill and maintain it.

Never store propane cylinders in buildings or garages. If you store a gas grill inside during the winter, disconnect the cylinder and leave it outside.

## Barbecue Grills

Stovetop and oven fires are not the only types of cooking fires. As the weather gets warmer, more people will begin to use barbecue grills. While many of the safety tips are similar to indoor cooking, there are special concerns with barbecue grills.

- Position the grill well away from siding and deck railings and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
- Place the grill a safe distance from lawn games, play areas, and foot traffic.
- Keep children and pets away from the grill area by declaring a 3-foot "kid-free zone" around the grill.
- Put out several long-handled grilling tools to give the chef plenty of clearance from heat and flames when cooking food.
- Periodically remove grease and fat buildup in trays below the grill so it cannot be ignited by a hot grill.
- **Use only outdoors!** If used indoors, or in any enclosed spaces such as tents, barbecue grills pose both fire and carbon monoxide hazards.

## Burns and Scalds

Hospital emergency rooms treat around 29,850 thermal burns and 8,460 burns caused by cooking equipment. Ranges accounted for 62% of these thermal burns and grills 28%. Microwaves accounted for 41% of the scald burns. (Source: NFPA)

Because microwaves are the leading cause of scald burns, be extra careful when opening a heated food container. Heat food in containers that are marked 'microwave safe.' Since foods heat unevenly in the microwave, make sure you stir and test the food before eating.

## Protecting Children from Scalds and Burns

As the statistics suggest, young children are at a high risk of being burned by hot food and liquid. You can help prevent these injuries by following a few basic tips:

- Keep children at least 3 feet away from where food and drink are being prepared or carried.
- Keep hot foods and liquids away from the table or counter edges.
- Use the stove's back burners if you have young children in the home.

- Never hold a child while cooking, drinking, or carrying hot foods or liquids.

**Also, teach children that hot things burn!**

For more information on Disaster Preparedness and safety related materials, please see our website at: [www.hayward-ca.gov](http://www.hayward-ca.gov) click on the red “Disaster Preparedness” button or contact the Hayward Fire Department [Emergency Services Office](#) for additional information at (510) 583-4948.